

Volunteer Recognition Ceremony

31 May 05

Good morning and welcome to USSOUTHCOM's Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.

It is a pleasure to see so many people here – especially since most of you are volunteers. Take a look at all the individuals sitting here today – each of you with unique and highly valuable skill sets, years and years of formal education, and decades of personal knowledge as a strong base – and then multiply that individual capability by all the people in

this room, plus all of those who are not present because they're out volunteering right now. Think of all the power resulting from that capacity and talent, and I think you can begin to see the positive impact that volunteers like you have on our country.

National Volunteer Week has been an annual celebration since 1974, when President Nixon recognized the critical importance of volunteers to our society. Every single president since then has signed a proclamation promoting the value of this week, as have governors, mayors, military installation

commanders, and other officials serving in the citizen's interest. As fellow servants of the public, they realize full well the structure and strength that volunteer service brings to our society.

I am sure that anyone who has ever received the benefit of volunteerism could honestly agree with the statement that "ten seconds of a volunteer's time can make a huge positive difference that sometimes lasts a lifetime." Doing the math brings your contributions very clearly into view: USSOUTHCOM volunteers provided an incredible 15,000 hours of their time last

year; this year it has already been 28,000 hours. And what is 28,000 hours divided by ten seconds? How many lives does that change? And that is just here at USSOUTHCOM. How many lives have been touched across the United States by volunteers?

The latest study on volunteers by the Bureau of Labor Statistics reflects that over 64 million Americans volunteered their valuable time for the good of us all last year. So volunteers like you are actually larger than any single military in the world... in fact, volunteer Americans would be larger than all

of the armies of all the nations in the world put together!

Shortly, I will have the pleasure of offering certificates to you in gratitude of your selfless service. As you know, your volunteer service has benefited many, many people – most of whom will never actually meet the kind person who provided it. So while I get the honor of actually presenting the certificates –know that in reality it is presented to you from everyone you have helped in the last year -- everyone whose life you have touched through

volunteering. Realize that in every single certificate are represented your selfless efforts, your knowledgeable words, and your priceless experience that those you helped will remember and value for the rest of their lives. The certificate I present to you stands for the multiple human lives that you have changed permanently, and for the better.